

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-51 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 11, 13, 21, 29, 37 and 44 have been amended and Claims 50 and 51 have been added by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 7-13 and 17-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Aiello, Jr. et al.; Claims 2-6 and 14-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Aiello, Jr. et al. and Shibusawa et al.; and Claims 21-36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Aiello, Jr. et al. and Shibusawa et al..

The present invention currently includes independent Claims 1, 11, 13, 21, 29, 37, 42 and 44. Arguments will first be presented distinguishing independent Claims 1, 13, 21, 29, 37 and 44 over the applied art and then arguments will be presented distinguishing independent Claims 11 and 42 over the applied art.

Independent Claim 1 has been amended to recite that the selecting means automatically selects a printer having a lowest printing cost from a plurality of printers matching with the desired number of printings. Independent Claims 13, 21, 29, 37 and 44 have been amended in a similar fashion.

In a non-limiting example, Figure 1 illustrates a printing system 1 including three different types of printers, i.e., the laser printer 4, digital copier 5 and stencil printer 6. As for a printing cost for a single printing, the laser printer 4 and digital copier 5 each using toner do not noticeably vary. By contrast, the stencil printer 6 using masters and ink reduces the printing cost for a single printing with an increase in the desired number of printings. Therefore, at the present stage of development, the stencil printer 6 is lower in printing cost than the laser printer 4 and digital copier 5 for a given number of printers, e.g., ten or more

printings (see page 7, lines 16-25). Thus, according to the claimed invention, a printer having a lowest printing cost is automatically selected thereby reducing the cost of the desired number of printings. The automatically selecting feature is also described in the specification at page 9, lines 1-5 and page 11, lines 4-9, for example.

The outstanding Office Action recognizes that Aiello, Jr. et al. does not teach the lowest printing cost is selected matching with the desired number of printings, but states that Aiello, Jr. et al. teaches an operator can select a specific printer for the particular print job, and thus the printer having the feature for the lowest printing cost to be selected is well known in the prior art because the operator can select any printer connected to the server.

First, Applicants respectfully submit that an operator would not necessarily know which printer would produce the lowest printing costs, especially because Aiello, Jr. et al. does not teach or suggest displaying any information regarding the lowest printing cost. Further, as noted above, each of independent Claims 1, 13, 21, 29, 37 and 44 have been amended to recite that the selecting means automatically selects a printer having a lowest printing cost from a plurality of printers matching with the desired number of printings.

Thus, according to the claimed invention, the selecting means automatically selects the printer having the lowest printing cost and thereby the cost of printing is reduced. There is no user intervention required to determine what is the lowest cost printer. Shibusawa et al. also do not teach or suggest the claimed features.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted independent Claims 1, 13, 21, 29, 37 and 44 and each of the claims depending therefrom are allowable.

Turning now to independent Claims 11 and 42. Each of these claims recite that a plurality of printers and displayed together with printer-by-printer additional information indicating a printing cost for decision that is based on the desired number of printings in such a manner that any one of the plurality of printers can be selected.

Further, the outstanding Office Action states Aiello, Jr. et al. teaches displaying information together with a printer-by-printer additional information indicating at least a printing cost for decision and cites column 2, lines 26-34. However, as discussed in the previous response filed May 5, 2003, neither Aiello, Jr. et al. nor Shibusawa et al. teach or suggest displaying information indicating a printing cost, especially which is based on the desired number of printings.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted independent Claims 11 and 42 and each of the claims depending therefrom are also allowable.

Further, new dependent Claims 50 and 51 have been added to set forth the invention in a varying scope, and are similar to dependent Claims 39 and 40, but depend either directly or indirectly on Claim 1.

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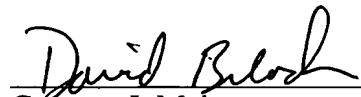
Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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